

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NICE 00048 311746Z

ACTION OES-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ERDA-07 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
CIEP-02 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07
INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 USIA-15 SP-02
SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-10 FEA-01 PA-02 PRS-01
ISO-00 /133 W

-----312145Z 125620 /66

R 311620Z JAN 77

FM AMCONSUL NICE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1263

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

UNCLAS NICE 048

E.O. 11652,: N/A

TAGS : TGEN, ENRG, PINT, IT, FR

SUBJECT : INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ENERGY CONFERENCE, NICE

1. SUBSEQUENT TO THE INAUGURATION OF THE FIRST FRENCH SOLAR GENERATING PLANT IN ODEILLO (PYRENEES ORIENTALES), AN INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ENERGY CONFERENCE WAS HELD IN NICE FROM JANUARY 27 THROUGH 29, 1977. THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING, ORGANIZED AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE FRENCH MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND RESEARCH, WAS ATTENDED BY MINISTERIAL-LEVEL DELEGATIONS FROM TWENTY-TWO NATIONS LOCATED IN THE SUN BELT AS WELL AS FROM FOUR INTERNATIONAL BODIES.

2. THE MAIN THEME OF THE CONFERENCE, EXPOUNDED BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT'S DIRECTOR OF NEW SOURCES OF ENERGY, JEAN-CLAUDE COLLI, WAS A PROPOSAL ADVOCATING COMPLETE TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION AMONG THE COUNTRIES

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IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN IN VIEW OF HARNESSING AND UTILIZING SOLAR ENERGY. HE PROPOSED THE EVENTUAL CREATION OF A MEDITERRANEAN-BASED BANK OF EXPERTS IN SOLAR ENERGY WHICH WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO ALL MEMBER NATIONS. FRANCE ALSO WISHES TO FOSTER AND ENCOURAGE COOPERATION ON COMMON PROGRAMS AND SOLAR RESEARCH PROJECTS. COLLI INSISTED THAT, IN ORGANIZING THE CONFERENCE, IT WAS THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT'S

OBJECTIVE NEITHER TO SELL NOR TO SIGN LARGE CONTRACTS WITH OTHER NATIONS BUT SIMPLY TO ASSEMBLE THE DIVERSE AND COMPLEMENTARY EXPERTISE IN THE FIELD OF SOLAR ENERGY TO THE BENEFIT OF ALL NATIONS.

3. THE CONFERENCE CONCLUDED ON A SOUR NOTE WHEN THE ITALIAN MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, CARLO DONAT-CATTIN, TOOK EXCEPTION TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF MICHEL D'ORNANO, FRENCH MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND RESEARCH, THAT A PERMANENT SECRETARIAT OF SOLAR ENERGY WOULD BE ESTABLISHED BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND PLACED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF JEAN-CLAUDE COLLI. IN REFUSING TO SIGN THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE, WHICH, IN EFFECT, CREATED A SECRETARIAT CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CENTRALIZING AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION ON SOLAR ENERGY AS WELL AS PREPARING THE ORGANIZATION OF A SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE WITHIN SIX MONTHS OR A YEAR, DONAT-CATTIN CLAIMED THAT THE CREATION OF SUCH A SECRETARIAT WOULD IN NO WAY ASSURE FULL PARTICIPATION AND COOPERATION AMONG MEMBER NATIONS. HE CITED, AS AN EXAMPLE, THE FACT THAT IN THE PREPARATION OF THE NICE MEETING, FRANCE CONSULTED WITH NONE OF HER PARTNERS. HE ADDED THAT THE ITALIAN DELEGATION HAD COME TO NICE OVERLOOKING THIS SLIGHT, THINKING THAT ONCE THE MEETING WAS UNDERWAY USEFUL COOPERATION WOULD RESULT. DONAT-CATTIN STATED THAT HIS DELEGATION WISHED TO POINT OUT THAT THE CONFERENCE, INSTEAD OF PROVING TO BE THE START OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THIS IMPORTANT FIELD, HAS TURNED OUT TO BE SIMPLE COMMERCIAL VENTURE. HE WARNED HIS AUDIENCE

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NOT TO FORGET THAT THE ITALIANS ARE ALSO BUSINESSMEN AND THAT THEY FULLY INTEND NOT TO HAVE THEIR COMMERCIAL RIGHTS RESTRICTED.

4. SPEAKING WITH THE PRESS AFTER THE CONFERENCE, DONAT-CATTIN, IN AN APPARENT REFERENCE TO SEVERAL TECHNICAL AGREEMENTS ON SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT WHICH FRANCE HAS RECENTLY SIGNED WITH ARAB NATIONS (SAUDI-ARABIA, EGYPT, ALGERIA), HE CATEGORIZED THE FRENCH COMMERCIAL OPERATION IN THIS AREA AS QUOTE NEO-COLONIALIST IN SPIRIT UNQUOTE. A MEMBER OF THE FRENCH DELEGATION LATER COMMENTED THAT DONAT-CATTIN'S INDIGNATION WAS SURELY CAUSED BY RECENT FRENCH SUCCESSES OVER ITALIAN COMPETITION.

5. THE CONFERENCE PAPERS ARE BEING POUCHED DEPARTMENT (OES).
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SOLAR POWER, PLANNING MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 31-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977NICE00048
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770034-0559
Format: TEL
From: NICE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977012/aaaaabvi.tel
Line Count: 113
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 15619ed1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28-Sep-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3507856
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ENERGY CONFERENCE, NICE
TAGS: TGEN, ENRG, PINT, IT, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/15619ed1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009